

Basic Computers Lesson 1

The Windows XP Desktop

When you first switch your computer and monitor on, your screen might look something like this, in the link below (It's too big for this page!).

This is the Windows XP Desktop. There are a number of things to notice about the Desktop. First, all those little pictures on top of the big picture. (Your screen may well be nice and colorful). There are 4 in the image above. The pictures are called icons.

To get some practice with using your mouse, click on each of your Desktop icons. (If you have only one icon, the Recycle Bin, then practice with that for the time being. We'll see how to add shortcuts soon.) Click on them with your Left mouse button, a Single Click. You should notice that the icons change color, usually blue. When they do change color, the icon is said to be selected.

Now click on any of your icons with the Right mouse button, again a Single Click. What happens now?

You should see a menu popping up with a list of items on it. The menu pops up because of that Right Click - the Right click is usually a shortcut click. Each icon on your Desktop has a shortcut associated with it. Indeed, the icons themselves are shortcuts. Each picture is associated with a program on your computer. When you clicked an icon with your left mouse button, the only thing that happened was that it turned a different color. You had selected it by clicking the icon with your left mouse button.

Now try to double click each icon with the Left mouse button and see what happens. You should find that some sort of software, or program is launched.

So the desktop icons are shortcuts to your programs. That's why they are there - so that you can get at your programs with a Double Click of your left mouse button.

The Start Menu

We saw in the last lesson that the desktop can be used to launch your software. Another way to launch your programs is through the Start menu at the bottom of the Desktop. Your Start button should look something like the one below:



Click your Start button once with your Left hand mouse button. What you will see is a menu popping up. This one below:



Notice the name "**KC**" next to the image. Yours will show the name your typed when setting up Windows XP.

The menu bar is split into three sections. The first section, the white one on the left, has seven items in it. The first three are shortcuts to a web browser, email

software, and easyPHP. The four items under this are shortcuts to recently used programs. These will change as you start up and close down software packages. Yours will probably be different items. One Single click with the Left mouse button on any of these items will launch some software.

The second section has just one item in it: **All Programs**. There is a green arrow next to this text. Clicking on the green arrow will bring up menu where you can find all the software installed on your computer. And this is the one we're interested in. We'll explain it in more detail in a moment.

The section on the right of the Start menu, the one in pale blue, is for special areas of your computer, and shortcuts to folders and files that are used frequently. You can also get help here, and search your computer for files and folders (we'll see how to do this shortly.)

At the bottom of the start menu are two buttons, one for logging off and one for closing down your computer. There is a difference between the two, but the one you'll probably want when it comes to turning off your computer is Shut Down. Clicking it once with your Left mouse button will give you this pop up box, called a dialogue box.



The dialogue box is giving you four options. Click the second option "Turn Off" with your left mouse button, a Single Click, if you want to completely close down your computer. The other popular option is "Restart". If you change your mind, click the Cancel button at the bottom. The dialogue box will disappear.

But let's concentrate on that green button on the Start Menu, the one to the right of "All Programs." Click the button with your left mouse button. A menu will appear. Actually, it's a sub menu - a menu on a menu! It will look something like the one below:



As you can see, the Programs Sub menu is fairly small, but it gets bigger the more software you install. Your Programs menu may well be longer than this one. When you install some new software, a shortcut to it will probably be added to this Programs Sub menu.

Notice the black arrows on the menu. This indicates that there is another submenu available. The menu will appear when you move your mouse to an item that has a black arrow next to it.

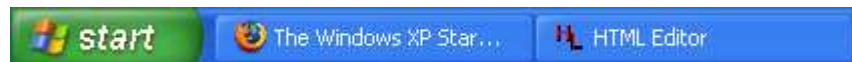
Move your mouse over to the Programs Sub menu. Then move your mouse up and down it. You should see a light colored line moving with your mouse. This line is telling you which item of the menu you are currently on.

To launch one of your software programs, click an item on the list with your Left mouse button, a Single Click. When you do, the software is launched.

To quickly close down the software you have launched, look in the right hand corner. Search for this, in the picture below



Click the red X to close down your software. The one on the left of the three, with the single line, will make your software disappear. But it will not have closed down. Look at the bottom of your Desktop. You'll see something like this:



The two long rectangles indicate that two programs are still open. In the image above, the Firefox web browser is open, as well as the Home and Learn Web Editor.

What we'll do now is to create a Shortcut to your "My Documents" folder, which we will place on the Desktop. You will then be able to open this folder by Double-Clicking its icon on the desktop.

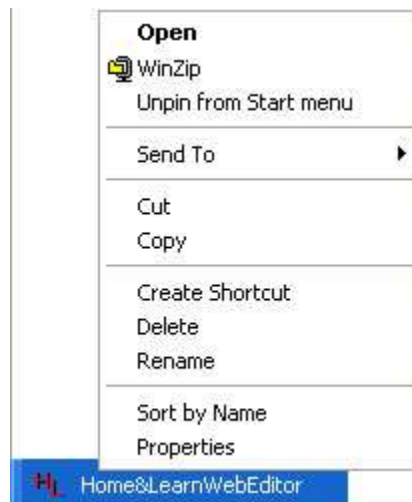
How to create a Desktop Shortcut

To create a shortcut to a program, and display the shortcut on the Desktop, do the following:

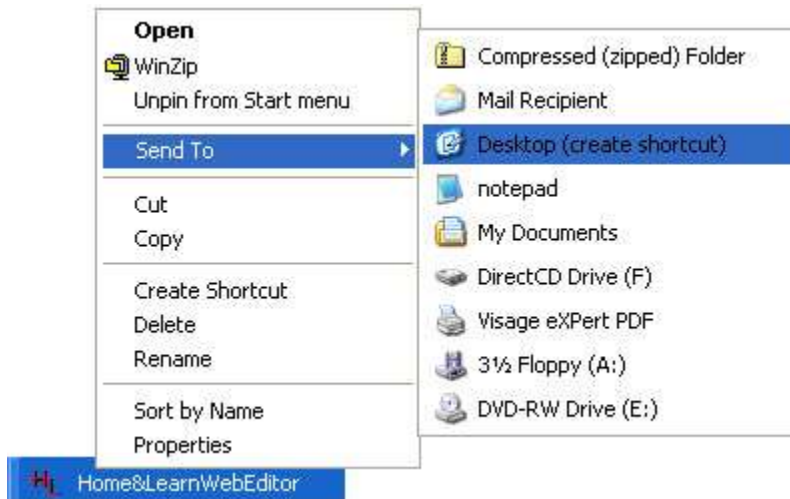
- Click the **Start** button on your desktop
- From the Start menu, locate the "**All Programs**" item
- Move your mouse to the program you want to create a shortcut to. In the image below, we've gone for the Home and Learn Web Editor



- **Right click** on the menu item to see a new menu appear:



- On this menu, locate the "**Send to**" item
- On the Send to item, Left click on "**Desktop (create shortcut)**":



- When you left click Desktop (create shortcut), a new shortcut appears on your main screen - the Desktop.
- Double click your new shortcut to test it out. You should see a new window opening, and the program will start

Now that you've had a bit of practice with your mouse, we'll move on to exploring the files and folders on your hard drive.

We'll start with the Hard Drive itself.

What is a Hard Drive?

A hard drive is nothing more than a magnetized storage area. Your Operating System is stored on your hard drive, as well as all your software programs, like Microsoft Word. The hard drive is actually a few circular disks stacked one on top of the other. A little arm moves over the disks and writes things to these circular platters, and reads them. When you save a file or create a new folder, think of these circular platters being written to and you'll have a basic idea of just what your hard drive is.

A hard drive is given a letter of the alphabet for convenience sake, and in most computers this will be the letter C. That's why the hard drive is popularly known as the C Drive. There are other drives on your computer. These are the usual drives on modern Personal Computers:

Floppy Drive or A drive	There will be a thin slot on the front of your computer. Into the gap, a disk is inserted. This is your floppy drive, and the disk is called a floppy disk
CD Rom Drive or D Drive	Press a button on the front of your computer and a tray will probably slide out. The tray will accept a circular disk - a CD Rom.
DVD Drive	A DVD disk is the same size and shape as a CD, but can hold more information. You can play a CD in a DVD Drive, but you can't play a DVD disk in a CD Rom Drive
CD/DVD Writer	These types of drives are for creating your own CD's or DVD's. They are becoming standard on a new computer

A modern Hard Drive is measured in Gigabytes. To find out how big your Hard drive is, click the next part of this lesson.

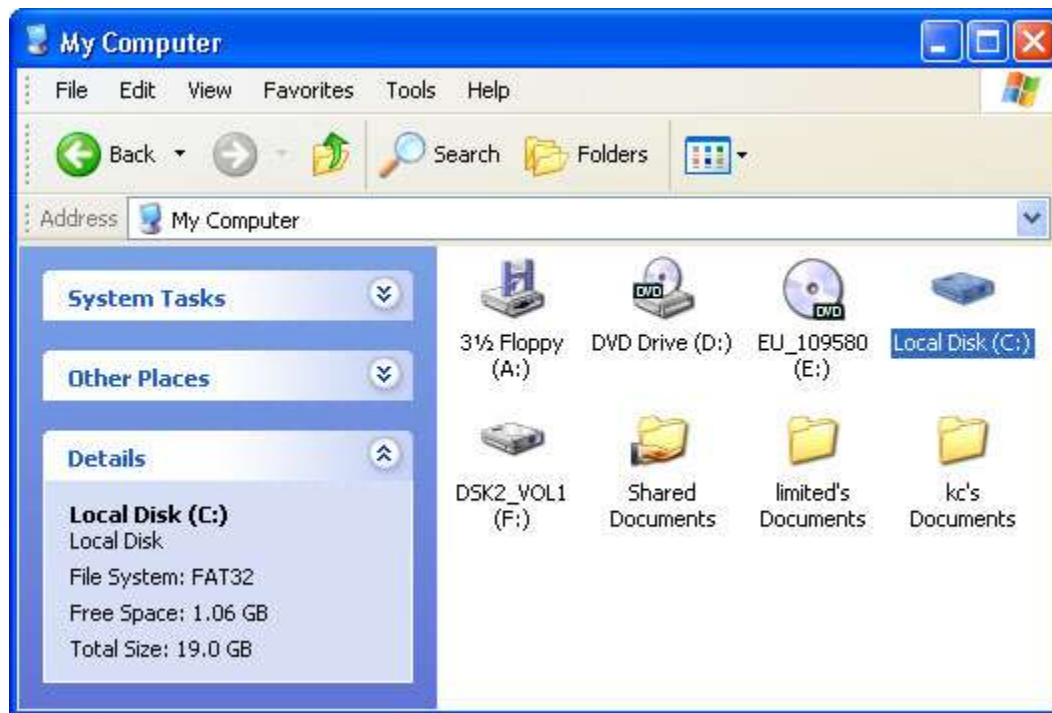
What Size is your Hard Drive?

Find the "My Computer" icon in the Start menu, and click with your left mouse button. When the window opens it will look something like this one:



The "My Computer" screen shows you different areas of your computer. In the picture, there are icons for the Floppy Drive, The C drive, and the D Drive. Don't worry if yours is not the same. But you'll probably have a D drive icon. There is a CD over the D drive icon, indicating that there is a CD in the disk drive on this computer.

The one we're interested in is the C drive icon. This is the Hard drive. There are two ways you can check your Hard drive to see how big it is. The easiest way is to click once on the C icon with your Left mouse button. The area on the left of the window will change to this:



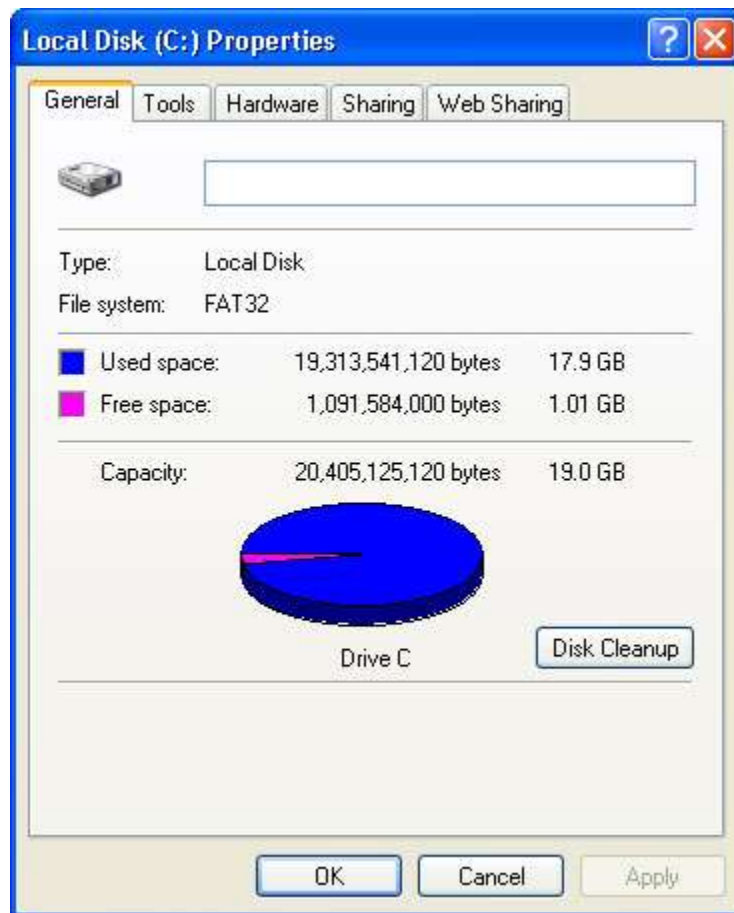
The "Details" section at the bottom is showing how much space is free on your hard drive. It also shows how big the Hard drive is. GB stands for Gigabytes. So this Hard drive is just over 19 gigabytes. Hard drives of 20, 40, and 100 Gigabytes and larger are common in today's computer market.

There is another way to check how big your Hard drive is.

Click on the C icon from the My Computer screen. But click on it with your Right mouse button. You'll get a menu similar to the one below.



Click on "Properties" with your Left mouse button. You'll get the following dialogue box popping up.



Here, we get a pie chart showing us information about the hard drive: Used Space, Free Space and Capacity (How big your hard drive is). The Capacity is showing 19.0 Gigabytes, Used space 17.9 Gigabytes, and Free space 1.01 Gigabytes.

Click the OK button to get rid of the dialogue box (One click with the left mouse button.)

Get rid of the "My Computer" screen by clicking the red X in the top right hand corner.

What we'll do now is create a folder on the hard drive. But we'll use the Windows Explorer to do it.